

D R A F T

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW

POLICY PAPER #11

Preserving Transportation Corridors

DATE: October 9, 2000

BACKGROUND

The 1994 Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year planning document. There are policy actions that can be taken to express a “public need” or “desire” for transportation corridors that may not be built until after that 20-year horizon. Drawing a general line on a plan map is the usual approach to expressing that need.

The corridor will not exist in that future year unless the “public” makes a greater commitment to creating it. The steps in the process of committing to a future transportation corridor, in order of increasing commitment and cost, are:

1. Legislative Action to express the desire for the corridor by drawing a generalized line on the plan map.
2. Corridor study to set a less generalized alignment.
3. Demand projection to size facility and determine type of transportation facility.
4. Engineer alignment and legislative action to adopt a centerline description.
5. Purchase right-of-way to preserve corridor.
6. Design and construct transportation facility.

The County’s *Arterial Atlas* takes the process up to step 3.

For Clark County, steps 4 through 6 only occur when the funding has been lined up for right-of-way acquisition and construction. That restriction usually precludes right-of-way acquisition of corridors needed beyond the first three years of the six-year transportation improvement program.

If development is proposed on property that is identified in the *Arterial Atlas* as being part of the generalized alignment for a county arterial road, the applicant is asked to show how the development would accommodate that arterial. If step 4 has been completed, building setbacks within the development can be obtained that would allow the county to acquire the right-of-way unencumbered by structures when it is needed for the corridor construction. If the developer cannot or refuses to accommodate the planned roadway and

the county or city wants the roadway, the public agency must be prepared to acquire the right-of-way at the time of development approval.

The policy challenge is that most of these future corridors are farther in the future than the 20-year horizon of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. The Padden Parkway existed in some form on the transportation plan of Clark County since well before 1979 when the first land use plan was adopted. The right-of-way has been acquired parcel-by-parcel particularly when proposed development would preclude the construction of the parkway. It is only now being built to its ultimate number of lanes. It is much more difficult to set a generalized alignment, yet alone determine facility type and size for a facility that may be 21 to 50 years in the future. The legal realities governing exaction (the establishment of nexus) preclude right-of-way dedication for facilities whose need exists beyond the 20 year planning horizon of the comprehensive plan. That difficulty makes it almost impossible to preserve these future possible transportation corridors without a dramatically different approach.

What issues have come up in discussion of this subject?

The Steering Committee raised this issue of planning for future connections between urban centers within the county. The County's *Arterial Atlas* does not identify any future corridors between the centers other than existing state highways and county roads. The *Arterial Atlas* does not define any improvements to the state highway system and, as a policy, does not propose roadway capacity increase in the rural area.

This issue may also emerge with the I-5 Trade Corridor Study being conducted by Oregon Department of Transportation. The focus of the study is preserving freight movement capacity within the I-5 corridor in Oregon and Washington. There may be proposals (and future federal funding) for roadway improvements that may significantly increase capacity across the Columbia River, including planning for future crossings and associated roadway improvements on both sides of the river.

If the focus of our comprehensive plan's transportation element is the promotion of mobility through use of alternative modes and the development of compact, integrated urban development, identifying the need for future high-capacity transportation corridors for single-occupant vehicle travel will be inconsistent with that focus. Future transit corridors should be recognized in the transportation element as part of the community infrastructure. The planning, engineering and eventual construction of such transit corridors must be the result of partnership between jurisdictions, including C-TRAN.

If the community wishes to pursue establishing a transportation corridor to serve demand between the urban centers of the county, it is possible to plan for that corridor. The corridor will be expensive to construct unless a community consensus develops to fund the corridor well before the demand for the corridor exists.

Implications for Change:

Adopt a “future corridor map” as a Countywide Planning Policy

Implication: A future corridor map could be adopted as part of the countywide planning policies with appropriate language designating the desired corridors. To make this legislative approach fully effective, planning and engineering will be needed to identify the corridors sufficiently to preserve them.

This approach may be particularly necessary in the identified urban reserve areas where pressure exists for the development of urban services to provide for the future urban population. That development should take into account the need for rural roadways to transition to urban roadways when those areas are brought into the urban area.

Adopt specific corridors planned in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Implication: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan is the major tool of coordination for transportation corridors that serve travel demand between communities within, and external to, Clark County. Future corridors could be examined and established at a Metropolitan Transportation Plan level. It is the most appropriate tool for reaching a consensus between jurisdictions on the nature and location of future transportation corridors that serve regional travel demands. As the “table” at which grant funding decisions are discussed, the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) Board has the further ability to leverage local investment with grant sources to provide funding for county-wide transportation facilities. While this approach is not part of the County Comprehensive Plan review process, it could be pursued in those processes outside of the plan review.

This may not be as effective as a county wide planning policy at preserving these “future” corridors. The Metropolitan Transportation Plan is rarely referred to at a local level when reviewing development applications. It may be more effective than county wide planning policy at advancing funding requests (grants) for engineering and right-of-way acquisition.

TAC Recommendation

RTC Study of Intra-County Mobility Corridors

It is the understanding of the Technical Advisory Committee that RTC has started or is about to start an examination of the county-wide mobility corridors with a focus on intra-county transportation needs (versus inter-county or bi-state needs). The Technical Advisory Committee suggests that this is the most appropriate forum for this corridor preservation discussion. Further TAC believes such a discussion must grapple with the challenges of both providing transportation capacity and controlling land access to existing and “future” corridors.

Pre-planning of Future Corridors in Urban Reserve Areas

TAC believes that the areas most at risk of being future arterial “bottlenecks” are existing urban and rural arterial facilities that pass through the urban reserve. Pre-planning urban reserves for their transition is necessary. This pre-planning for the arterial facilities may be achieved by enhancing their status on the County Arterial Atlas. Developing access control on existing corridors will help maintain capacity for the increased demand of extending those corridors in the future.

Nexus Precludes A “Distant Future” Corridor Exaction

Legal practicalities prevent jurisdictions from relying on exaction in development review, as the tool to get right-of-way for corridors whose need is not predicted for more than 20 years (the horizon of the comprehensive plan). If such corridors are desired, there must be a community consensus to develop a funding mechanism to acquire those corridors well in advance of the need.

Steering Committee Discussion –

Action Taken –

Supporting Data